

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 10, 2025

MEETING CONVENED: 7:00 p.m. Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Helga Huntley, Andrew O'Donnell, Mike Cambron, John Mateyko, Sheila Smith

STAFF: Jordan Herring, Administrative Professional I
Katya Raskin, Planner I
Ryan Straub, Lead Property Maintenance Inspector

Dr. Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON MAY 13, 2025:

- Dr. Huntley requested two edits be made to the May 13th minutes: the first was to make a clear distinction between the LIDAR and boots-on-the-ground tree inventories, and the second was to clarify that she proposed redefining what a weed is in City Code instead of mirroring New Castle County's mowing code.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MAY 13, 2025 MEETING AS AMENDED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

ABSENT: IRVINE.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- There was no public comment.

3. STATUS UPDATE FROM THE CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE ON CAC RECOMMENDATIONS (4/25 – COLLABORATION WITH THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT, 3/25 – MAJOR PARKS PROJECTS, 12/24 – LIGHTING AT PHILLIPS PARK, 8/24 – CLIMATE CHANGE)

- Ms. Herring shared there were no updates on any of the listed recommendations. She explained items received by City Council on the consent agenda cannot move forward unless a Councilmember specifically requests to pull the item from the consent agenda for future discussion. There is nothing that precludes a member of the CAC from directly notifying their Councilmember of the upcoming item and encouraging them to pull it from the consent agenda for further discussion. The CAC reached a consensus that Dr. Huntley would attend a City Council meeting to remind Council of the recommendations they have received.

4. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN REQUEST-FOR-PROPOSAL

- Ms. Herring shared, on behalf of Assistant City Manager – Operations Jeff Martindale, a Request-for-Proposal (RFP) for the Climate Action Plan. Mr. Martindale sought feedback from the CAC on whether they would still like to use their funding for this project or wait for the money to be provided by the Federal Government (notably through the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant), which could take a long time.
- The CAC expressed they would be open to allocating at least a portion of their funding but were concerned about the cost. The cost was previously mentioned to be in the ballpark of \$50,000 and would consume the majority of the CAC's budget should they choose to fund it themselves. Dr. Huntley believed other projects could utilize this funding, such as maintaining the City's parks. Mr. Cambron suggested investigating whether the project's cost could be divided over two years. Dr. Huntley requested that Ms. Herring communicate to Mr. Martindale that the CAC would like to see a cost estimate for the Climate Action Plan, along with a financial proposal, with the preference that the CAC could divide the cost over two years. If it is not possible to divide the cost over two years, then they would like to see a financial proposal for one year.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE & 2025 BUDGET

- Postponed due to Mr. Martindale's absence.

6. COMMUNITY DAY 2024 PUBLIC FEEDBACK SUMMARY

- Mr. Cambron shared the feedback received from the CAC's 2024 Community Day presentation, where residents gave insight into what conservation and sustainability issues they believed were essential to address. Such items included composting, multi-stream recycling, and transportation. Regarding transportation, the CAC inquired about the possibility of the City collaborating with the University of Delaware to allow residents to use UD buses. Dr. Huntley stated that she would place these items on a future agenda for discussion. Mr. Cambron believed the feedback to the CAC's Community Day booth was overall very positive. He noted the event helped to notify many residents about the CAC's existence within the City's boards and commissions.
- Ann Burris, 415 Nottingham Road, noted regarding composting that the City of Montreal collects food waste to feed livestock.

7. ENGLISH IVY REMOVAL:

- Ms. Smith gave a presentation to the CAC regarding her work with Newark's Master Naturalists to remove English ivy around the city. She shared many facts about the dangers of this invasive species, such as how it acts as a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch and deprives other plants of resources without providing any to the environment. Mr. O'Donnell stated he would connect Ms. Smith with a local Scouts BSA leader to discuss this initiative. Mr. Mateyko suggested including this information in a "Tips for Homeowners" ad. Ms. Smith stated she would attend a future Council meeting to share information about the Master Naturalists and their work during public comment. In addition, she would coordinate with Mr. Martindale and Chief of Community

Engagement Jayme Gravell to investigate how to share this information through the City's social media.

8. LIGHT POLLUTION:

- Ms. Smith shared the City of Lewes has used a Dark Sky lighting template to create a draft lighting ordinance. She stated light pollution is a year-round issue that affects the health of multiple organisms. She believed the upcoming expansion of the warehouse at the City's Maintenance Yard to be a potential opportunity to demonstrate how to adopt Dark Sky lighting principles in the City of Newark. She wanted to know if the City is considering the second half of a 2021 lighting resolution, which stated the City would work to reduce lighting on its property, when preparing for these projects. She wanted to investigate how lighting changes can be escalated from the CAC to City Council and then finally to City operations.
- Dr. Huntley believed the next step in such a process would be to recommend that City Council direct the Planning & Development Department to create a lighting ordinance which would include review and input from the CAC. The CAC could vote to approve this recommendation at their July meeting.
- Dr. Huntley asked Planner I Katya Raskin for her input. Ms. Raskin shared that lighting is considered in the review of a development's design, but it is not an emphasized portion of the process.

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: THAT THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION (CAC) SEND MS. SMITH TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO ASK WHETHER THEY WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE: 5 TO 0.

AYE: CAMBRON, HUNTLEY, O'DONNELL, MATEYKO, SMITH.

NAY: 0.

ABSTAIN: 0.

ABSENT: IRVINE.

9. SYSTEMS THINKING:

- Mr. Mateyko gave a presentation to the CAC regarding systems thinking, specifically after the issuance of three reports. One was the Nexus report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). He explained this to be a psychological practice of changing the way people think to implement change. He provided an example of how enhancing a location's aesthetics through tastefully dimmed lighting could not only reduce temperatures but also improve safety by attracting more people downtown and reducing light pollution. Another example is adding shade trees to cool streets, while also improving aesthetics by designing lights to be lit underneath tree canopies, thereby mitigating light trespass. He shared that there are three steps to achieve this change: envisioning goals and behavior patterns fostered by a properly functioning system, understanding why the current system is not achieving these goals and behaviors, and shifting thinking from indirect short-term gain to direct long-term well-being.

He believed changing to this way of thinking would boost both the quality and longevity of public health.

10. CONSERVATION CORNER ARTICLES WITH THE NEWARK POST

- Dr. Huntley shared she has spoken to Josh Shannon of The Newark Post, who stated there is a significant backlog but encouraged the CAC to continue submitting their articles. Ms. Smith volunteered to write an article about the Master Naturalists.

11. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- ***Old business:***
 - Mowing code — *by Ms. Raskin and Lead Property Inspector Ryan Straub.* Ms. Raskin explained she shared the CAC's comments from their previous discussion at the Planning & Development Department staff meeting, and it was noted that pollinator gardens are excluded from the definition of weeds. The only thing she believed would be of concern in Code Enforcement's ticketing program would be grass height, which cannot exceed 8 inches. However, pollinator gardens are not explicitly referenced in City Code. Mr. Straub added that the Code does state "...reasonably cultivated..." in its language, but interpretations of this phrase can vary. The Code Enforcement Division has worked with individuals who have natural habitat yards or gardens. However, some individuals who are not maintaining their property may use this as an excuse. In such cases, certifications or signs prove to be a benefit for those with legitimate habitat gardens. The Code Enforcement Division has also had situations where a person has filed a complaint against another property owner for their habitat or pollinator garden, and staff have been able to come to a compromise between both parties. Dr. Huntley appreciated Mr. Straub's insight and interpreted his comments as suggesting that they should instead focus on clarifying the guidelines for this provision, rather than making an actual change to the Code and believed this topic should be revisited on a future agenda.
- ***New business:***
 - None.

12. NEXT MEETING – JULY 8, 2025

MOTION BY DR. HUNTLEY, SECONDED BY MR. O'DONNELL: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Jordan Herring
Administrative Professional I

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